The International Decade of Indigenous Languages: evaluating national action plans in light of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

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The United Nations International Decade of Indigenous Language 2022-2032 (the "Decade") seeks to raise worldwide awareness of the vulnerable situation of Indigenous Peoples' languages. Identifying "the urgent need to preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages," the General Assembly resolution proclaiming the Decade calls on States to establish "national mechanisms with adequate funding" to implement the goals of the Decade "in partnership with indigenous peoples." The resolution further identifies the United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to serve as lead UN agency for the Decade and invites Indigenous Peoples, "as custodians of their own languages" to develop their own implementation measures as well. Several States have already adopted "national action plans," articulating commitments to advance the goals of the Decade. While these plans are clearly important at a symbolic level, how do we know if they will "preserve, revitalize and promote indigenous languages"? How should stakeholders develop and assess national action plans for the IDIL? This paper proposes a set of metrics, based on the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People to guide national action plans for the IDIL. Our fundamental concept is that language maintenance and revitalization are as much about culture and community, and the fundamental principle of Indigenous Peoples' self-determination, as language per se. Given the diversity of Indigenous Peoples, national action plans should offer Indigenous Peoples a structured menu of resources to meet their own objectives with respect to language rights. As they develop their objectives, Indigenous Peoples should have access to information, including data from applied linguistics, that may guide priorities both immediately and in the long term. The paper concludes with an assessment of UNESCO's Global Action Plan as it relates to existing national action plans and Indigenous Peoples' own activities for the Decade.

1. Implementing language rights

Indigenous Peoples often raise the question of how formal proclamations of human rights will improve their situations as a practical matter in home communities. (Carpenter and Riley 2014). This question is salient in language rights activism where, in some communities, the number of remaining speakers has dwindled to single digits (Carpenter and Tsykarev 2020). During the Decade, the leading model for realizing Indigenous Peoples' rights to language is to adopt an "action plan" in which a government, community, institution, or other entity commits to a 10-year plan including activities, investments, programs, and events that will further language recovery, education, maintenance, use, and transmission. Within these general outlines, goals might be very broad, such as fluency for the entire community, or particularized like training speakers to conduct religious ceremonies, maintaining traditional plant knowledge, promoting cultural identity, or accessing historical materials.

Under the framework of the Decade, language rights are human rights. (Carpenter and Tsykarev 2020). The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the "Declaration") provides a framework for understanding the rights of Indigenous Peoples and corresponding obligations of States in this context. Accordingly, our metrics track key articles of the Declaration: article 3 and the right to self-determination; article 4 and the rights autonomy and consultation (along with article 18's recognition of the right to participation and article 19's safeguard of "free, prior, and informed consent"); article 13 and the right to culture; article 14 and the right of education in Indigenous-language mediums; article 16 and the obligation of states to subsidize Indigenous media; and article 31 and the right of Indigenous Peoples' to exercise stewardship of traditional knowledge including language data.

We argue that national action plans should meet relevant human rights criteria and be informed by best practices from applied linguistics. As a matter of self-determination, national action plans must provide Indigenous Peoples with the space to articulate their own objectives vis à vis languages and the tools to assess how to achieve those objectives. Where a community seeks, for example, to create a new generation of fluent speakers, research shows that immersion schooling must continue at least K-8, with 80% of instruction in the target language. If an Indigenous community does not have the capacity to provide this kind of education immediately, then it may be necessary to articulate a phased plan including the development awareness, funding, and pedagogies, then teachers, materials, and facilities that would empower a community to initiate immersion schooling five or ten years out. If the goal is to maintain the language for an immediate purpose, such as conducting religious ceremonies, helping elders access health care, or keeping ecological knowledge alive, then other lessons from applied linguistics will be relevant in connecting national action plans to the goals of the community. There will not be a one size fits all approach for all Indigenous Peoples and the Declaration demands respect for the self-determination of each.

2. Metrics and Principles for Evaluation of National Action Plans

The most obvious overall metric and principle for evaluating National Action Plans is the Declaration and in particular the articles that relate directly or indirectly to language. Those Articles are quite general in nature however, and difficult to apply as actual metrics for evaluating action plans. To take just a single example, Article 13 states that "Indigenous peoples shall have the right to revitalize...their...languages." But there is a large body of both scholarly work and Indigenous reflection on what "revitalization" of a language actually means (not to mention whether "revitalization" is even the appropriate term, or whether words such as "reclamation" should be used instead). At the most detailed level, the response to this question would be that Indigenous Peoples will each have their own unique goals and understanding of what successful revitalization means. This is true, and certainly reflects Articles 3 and 4 in their concern for the self-determination and autonomy of Indigenous peoples. Such a response is not very helpful however for evaluating National Action Plans with regards to their adequacy to help Indigenous Peoples meet their goals.

In response, we provide two approaches here. First, we draw from a robust reading of the Declaration, and secondly, we bring recent findings in language revitalization, to propose detailed and concrete metrics for potential success of National Action Plans. For example, we envision that "language revitalization" means that the Indigenous language will be used as the predominant and preferred first language in the overall community, by all age groups (see Olthuis, Kivelä and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013:205 on Hawaiian goals). Of course, a certain community may choose to understand this term differently, but the Action Plan should empower ambitious goals, with the decision to pursue different ones belonging to the community itself, not the National Action planners. Relying on the linguistic literature, we understand "revital-

ization" to refer to a language not currently being used as the predominant and preferred first language in the overall community – otherwise the term "maintenance" would be more appropriate (Cowell 2016). We then examine best practices in language revitalization, asking in particular which specific methodologies and approaches have proven adequate to return a language to first-language usage and transmission, in a naturalistic (parent to child) manner, across the overall community or at least a large segment of it, and whether the National Action Plan will support the specific successful methodologies. In the following, we focus on a few key Articles and their interface with scholarly findings in linguistics.

Article 4 states that: "Indigenous peoples...have the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs...". Relatedly, Articles 18 recognizes that Indigenous Peoples "have the right to participate in decision-making which would affect their rights" and Article 19 provides that "States shall consult and cooperate in good faith with the indigenous peoples concerned in order to obtain their free, prior, and informed consent before adopting and implementing legislative or administrative matters that may affect them".

The obvious metric here (in this case not closely tied to technical linguistics) is: does the National Action Plan respect Indigenous Peoples' rights to autonomy and self-government? The guiding principle should be: National Action Plans should result from consultation with Indigenous peoples, and reflect a commitment made by states to work with Indigenous peoples in support of their languages while respecting their local autonomy, not a "national" plan developed only at the "national" level, which ignores local autonomy. Indeed, the Declaration requires "free, prior and informed consent" ("FPIC") for any actions affecting Indigenous Peoples (Article 19) and FPIC is a sine qua non of National Action Plans. (See Anderson 2020 for a description of an exemplary community-driven revitalization process in the US.)

Therefore, National Action Plan should specifically list Indigenous Peoples who were consulted, and how these consultations were done, and whether actual consent was provided. The National Plan should allow for regional, local, language-specific or even sub-language specific (i.e. dialect or reservation/reserve-based) sub-plans. Critiques have been levied against local language planning which replicates the ideologies and processes of Nation States on a more local level (Wright 2018:646-49; Gustafian, Guerrero and Jiménez 2016:37), or is in fact simply a top-down process done by the states themselves (Gustafian, Guerrero and Jiménez 2016:41-46). National Action Plans should also recognize that many Indigenous groups are cross-border peoples in relation to Nation States (Olthuis, Kivelä and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013:5; Gustafian, Guerrero and Jiménez 2016:40-41), and the integrity of those Peoples and their language efforts should not be compromised by Nation-State-based Action Plans.

In terms of linguistic details, Indigenous Peoples' local autonomy should prevail on matters such as whether or not the language will be written, whether materials will be made available on-line (written or audio/video), the orthography used, and the format in which items such as dictionaries, lessons or other materials will be presented. No NAP should specify nation-wide use of a single alphabet for all Indigenous languages, for example, or a single database format for language data.

Article 13 states: "Indigenous peoples have the right to revitalize, use, develop and transmit...their histories, languages, oral traditions, philosophies..."

The overall metric here is: does the National Action Plan support Indigenous Peoples' self-determination with respect to the transmission of culture and knowledge associated with a language? Teaching of or support of a language, without teaching and support of the ancillary cultural components associated with that language, is inadequate. There are cultural aspects of language education, including methodologies of transmission and values associated with language use (Alaska Native Knowledge Network 2001). Different languages are not just alternate ways of doing or saying or thinking "the same thing" (see K. King 2016:168 on "intercultural" vs. "bilingual" education models, with the latter involving simply one worldview, but with two languages).

Work on Indigenous youth identity shows that young people, who are crucial for the next generation of a language, look for and affiliate with distinctive communities, not languages per se (Wilson and Kamanā 2009), and may be especially interested in the use of the language in traditional subsistence activities, as a way of connecting to identity (Wilson and Kamanā 2009:371), or in having access to culturally-specific events where the language can actually be used (King 2018:608). Languages are associated with traditional knowledges, social structures and styles of interaction with people and the environment (McClatchey 2018), and this bonding with locality is a key feature of both identity and language revitalization (Wilson and Kamanā 2009:371). So-called "language revitalization" programs often underline that they are not just or even fundamentally about language, but about human development (King 2018:594-95; 608), "social

movement[s]" (Baldwin and Costa 2018:561, 567-68), community health and wellness (Taff et al 2018; Leonard 2021), and go "hand in hand with land reclamation and cultural revitalization" (Chennells and du Toit 2014 in Sands 2018:621; see also Sands 2018:622 and Gustafian, Guerrero and Jiménez 2016:35-38, 46; Zuckermann 2020:xxiii, 266-71). The most successful programs always include indigenous culture (Tang 2018:576, 579-80; Baldwin and Costa 2018:564-65; Pease-Pretty On Top 2003:21-29, 68-71).

Failure to include these elements in language education (or education more generally) robs the language of associative value and links to culture. National Action Plans must elaborate how locally distinctive cultural components will be included in local language and education plans. Unitary "national" education curriculums, even if taught in local languages, do not constitute effective Indigenous language maintenance plans over the long term. They will eventually tend to erase locally-distinctive culture and knowledge, and thus undermine the unique values associated with a local language.

Article 14 states that: "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems..."

The overall metric here is: does the plan support education in Indigenous languages (i.e. Indigenous-language-medium schools), with most or all courses taught in the Indigenous language? The guiding principle is: National Action Plans must support Indigenous-language education and Indigenous-language-medium educational systems: Indigenous languages should not be excluded from education and relegated only to the home, unless the community itself desires this.

Presence in educational settings, and associated literacy, are often crucial to the flourishing and perceived legitimacy of a language (Sands 2018:613; McCarty and Watahomigie 1999), though problems with a "literacy obsession" also exist (Sands 2018:625). Moreover, education in one's native language is the best practice for childhood education (Hornberger 2008:279; Mohanty 2009:5). Schools closely tied to local communities and local languages have been shown to produce better student success (Rau, Murphy and Bird 2019:69, 78; Johnson and Legato 2006:29; McCarty and Watahomigie 1999:9). Ideally, native-language education should continue throughout primary and secondary years for language maintenance. Children need to acquire advanced analytic and/or academic reading, writing and oral communication skills in their languages, not just basic "familiarity" (Gibbons and Ramirez 2004:12-13) Such skills, once learned in the native language, are easily transferred to a second language (May and Hill 2008:90).

Comprehensive (K-8 or K-12) immersion schools are widely recognized as the best single method to revitalize a language (Tang 2018:572, 576-77; Hinton and Hale 2001), though of course the ultimate goal is naturalistic, in-home transmission. Non-immersion schools typically fail to provide enough language instruction or input for students to achieve high levels of ability in the target indigenous language (O'Grady 2018:502), and this includes bilingual schools. Master-Apprentice Programs (Hinton 2002) can produce such high levels of ability, but they are intensive one-on-one programs, which on their own cannot produce large numbers of new speakers, although they may be crucial for producing a few new young speakers and teachers who can then work in immersion schools. Effective immersion schools need to have 80%+ of the teaching done in the target language (although Tang 2018:577 offers a figure of 50%, as do May and Hill 2008:85). Maori-language schools have been established in some cases with less than 50% Maori, others 50% Maori, others up to 80% Maori language, and others 100% Maori. Data show that after initial substantial enrollments in all the schools peaking in 1993 (King 2018:595), enrollments have now dropped, primarily in the 50% or less schools, while enrollment has actually increased in the 100% Maori-language schools (Olthuis, Kivelä and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013:195-96). This indicates dissatisfaction with the results of 50% or bilingual Maori-English schools, on the part of students, parents, and/or educators, contrasting with apparently increased success with Maori-medium-only schools (see also May 2013 on the greater effectiveness of Maori-dominant schools, King 2018:596 on this as the preferred option among the Maori).

Such schooling needs to continue through at least the 8th year of childhood education. Studies have shown rapid drops in the speaking ability even of fluent children when they are removed from a particular language environment at ages of ten or less (O'Grady 2018:495-96; May and Hill 2008:89-90; Huss 20008:126). In contrasts, speaking a language into adolescence can be associated with strong maintenance even years later (O'Grady 2018:497). To accomplish this length of schooling, teachers must be available, as well as curricular materials and curriculum developers. The lack of teachers and other support professionals is often a crucial obstacle to development of Indigenous-language education (Olthuis, Kivelä and Skutnabb-Kangas 2013:5-13; Tang 2018:577, 583, 587; Treuer 2020: 110, 123, 148).

Therefore, National Action Plans must contain support for Indigenous-language maintenance and/or revitalization through education, including 50%+ Indigenous-medium education, and teacher training and development, curriculum

development, and paraprofessional development to support school, through at least the 8th year of schooling. Ideally a full 12-13 years of primary and secondary education would be provided in the Indigenous language.

Article 16 states that: "Indigenous peoples have the right to establish their own media in their own languages..."

Research shows that for a language to flourish, it must maintain specific domains of usage, where it is the preferred or only language used, and ideally expand into new domains (King 2018:539; Williams 1992). One key domain is social and more general electronic media. Indigenous language presence in electronic and digital media is increasingly crucial to flourishing and perceived legitimacy of the language in many communities (King 2018b:597-98 on Maori; King 2018a:544 on Nahuat; Buszard-Welcher 2018). Media presence typically increases the prestige of a language, for all users (see King 2018:597; Benton 1985; Grin and Vaillancourt 1998). New digital media forms and processes are a major arena of language revitalization work (Galla 2009, Bird 2018; Coronel-Molina 2019).

Language revitalization must support opportunities for young people, in particular, to embrace an Indigenous-language identity – not just learn an Indigenous language (Sands 2018:620; Baldwin and Costa 2018:561-62, 565-66; Dicker et al 2009:156-57, 164-65; King 2009; Kipp 2001:20; McCarty et al 2006). This is unlikely to happen if the young people cannot carry out crucial everyday activities with each other using their Indigenous language. Youth are often intensely focused on digital access to indigenous languages (King 2018:598). Cowell argues that young people the world over are highly interested in being "cool" and "sexy," though of course what counts as "cool" or "sexy" is highly variable from culture to culture. But if young people cannot enact crucial parts of their desired identity in their Indigenous language, the language is at a severe disadvantage for generational transfer. This explains the increasing importance of Indigenous rap and hip-hop (Mullin 2023, International Hip Hop Awards Show 2022). Media may also be crucial for maintenance in diasporic situations, which are increasingly common in the Indigenous world (Sands 2018:618).

National Plans must therefore include provisions to support and subvent Indigenous languages in media, should their speakers wish to do so. In particular, plans must recognize that economies of scale often work against small Indigenous languages, especially with regards to more expensive types of media (television, film, etc.). Plans need to show a willingness of provide special subventions for Indigenous languages to address diseconomies of scale, above and beyond what may be provided for national languages on a per-capita basis.

Article 31 states that: "Indigenous peoples have the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their cultural heritage, traditional knowledge and traditional cultural expressions..."

The guiding principle: plans which will expose Indigenous languages and traditional knowledge to exploitation by outsiders for profit are not acceptable. In the US (for example), copyright often goes to the transcriber of a traditional narrative, not to the teller of the narrative. Action needs to be taken to change this inequity against oral languages. Similarly, developers of proprietary web applications may claim ownership of not only the application, but the data in them. Globally, there have been numerous cases where freely-available lexical data has been scraped off the internet and repackaged and sold by those unconnected to a community, including for the Arapaho community with which Cowell is familiar. With advances in AI, the potential for and fear of such abuses is growing quickly ("Indigenous Groups...").

Thus NAPs should respect the intellectual and cultural property of Indigenous peoples, as well as their data sovereignty with regards to language resources and archives. No plan should require deposits of language data in national archives or similar locations, or postings of data on-line. Plans should ensure that any subvention of apps, media, and similar technologies requires return of all data to the community, along with continued ownership of that data by the community. Most generally, Indigenous languages per se should not be converted into proprietary for-profit material, though of course payments for development work (curriculum development, language processing and analysis, production of websites or media and the like) are a legitimate and necessary process for which it is reasonable to expect payment.

Finally, we add one additional point: the linguistic literature is very clear that bilingualism is not an inhibitor of linguistic or cognitive development. The reverse is true: bilinguals outperform monolinguals in the long term (O'Grady 2018:498-500; Pease-Pretty On Top 2003:15). National Action Plans must overtly reject the ideology of monolingualism as the preferred language model throughout a Nation State.

3. Sample Evaluation of two National Action Plans

The present paper is ideally intended to help guide local communities and governments in developing and evaluating their own National Action Plans, as a supplement to documents such as the UN's GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPMENT OF NATIONAL ACTION PLANS FOR THE INTERNATIONAL DECADE OF INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES (December 2023). It is not up to outsiders to sit in judgement of such plans – most importantly, outsiders should not judge the ideals and goals proposed. Nor are there "best" plans, since each nation and community will have its own individual conditions and needs. However, since we have suggested some general critiera to consider, and since some National Action Plans have already been developed, we offer a few general observations about those plans in relation to the criteria outlined earlier in this paper. In particular, if one accepts the goals and ideals proposed in the plans themselves, are the plans adequate to realize those goals?

The Australian plan is entitled, "Visions of Country: Australian Action Plan for the International Decade of Indigenous Languages 2022-32." and is produced by the "Director Group" and the "Australian Government". The Director Group itself was composed of 13 indigenous and 5 government representatives (p. 8). With respect to the Declaration's Articles 3 and 4, the Plan explicitly acknowledges Indigenous People's right to self-determination. Among the five key themes of the plan, theme two states that Indigenous communities must be at the "centre" of all plans and activities (p. 7). Most importantly, the plan presents many case studies, which are clearly cases of locally-originated and locally-driven language initiatives – and apparently not driven or constrained by central government authorities.

The importance of Article 13 is also clear in the Australian Plan. Theme three of the Plan focuses on "knowledge transfer," not just language transmission, and theme four focuses on language use "on country" in interacting with the environment, with emphasis on transmission of "knowledges and skills" (p. 26). The plan states explicitly that it is "not just about language" and that it seeks to foster creation of "cultural beings" (p. 19). Finally, there is clear acknowledgement of a goal of creating strong youth identity, "integrity and pride" (p. 29).

Regarding Article 14, the plan features several case studies of locally-controlled and designed educational systems, including bilingual and immersion schools, with their own local teachers and curriculum. And regarding Article 31, the plan is very clear on the need to protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP), including detailed statements about this on the opening page.

Article 16 implicitly receives a good deal of attention to the extent that ICIP addresses Indigenous media of the more traditional sort. However, the Plan makes little mention of electronic media and their role in Indigenous communities in Australia. This may be because the communities themselves do not see this as a value or a focus, of course.

Despite the overall positive nature of the Plan, one can see some potential issues from the perspective of applied linguistics. The Plan discusses the question of bilingual education (p. 21, 22). As we have seen, this can sometimes be an effective way of maintaining an Indigenous language, especially when learned at home, but it is very difficult to produce high-level ability in an Indigenous language being learned as a second language in school. The Plan in fact notes that many Indigenous bilingual programs in Australia have closed over the years, which matches the finding reported above that many Maori partial-language programs have also been less successful or closed, while the full immersion programs remain strong.

The immersion programs described in the Plan (p. 15, 20, 21) are apparently targeted mostly at young children, and the claim is made that exposure through age seven to eight is sufficient to attain fluency. But as the research discussed above suggests that immersion programs need to continue through the 8th year of schooling (age 14-15 or so) to ensure that fluency is maintained after schooling – otherwise it can rapidly begin to be lost again. Despite legislation providing funding in some states (p. 12), it would appear that much more funding will be needed to develop fully effective immersion programs as some communities work towards true community bilingualism (p. 20). Based on the stated and implied goals of communities cited in the plan, it seems to lack national- and state-level commitments to adequately fund those goals. Indeed, at the broadest level, the plan might benefit from additional contextualization and commitments regarding the role of the national and state governments in the process of language maintenance and revitalization.

As a second example, we examine the national plan of Colombia: "Plan Decenal de Lenguas Nativas de Colombia." This plan offers an interesting general contrast to the Australian plan. It is more of a "top-down" plan than the Austalia's, as it envisions "unir esfuerzas de manera interministerial" ("unifying efforts at an interministerial level") (p. 9) before proceeding to particular Indigenous Peoples. It also includes much more formal information, in a way typical of govern-

ment- or academic-generated documents: extensive sections on national laws relative to Indigenous languages, census data on Indigenous populations and numbers of language speakers, categorization of languages by family and location, a discussion of the historical causes of language loss and endangerment, a long list of terminology and definiions, and a discussion of previous plans and actions.

The Plan provides a set of principles to guide the process of language protection (p. 51-52). These are in general well-aligned with the Declarations: focus on local self-determination; emphasis on the importance of local knowledge and identity, not just language; rights to local educational control; and protection of intellectual property. The Plan then provides eight strategies for language protection (p. 65). One of these (#4) specifically addresses media and technologies.

The strategies are then presented in a highly complex set of flow-charts and tables, with tasks assigned to specific formal entities, with timelines. One example, in the media category (p. 76), is:

« Garantizar presupuestalmente la creación, ampliación, difusión e implementación de convenios, becas y estímulos para creadores e innovadores indígenas sobre herramientas de diseño, material mulltimedia, aplicaciones para celular y otros software relacionados con las lenguas indígenas que permitan la protección, fortalecimiento y la revitalización de la identidad cultural de acuerdo a usos y costumbres. »

"Provide budget for the creation, development, dissemination and implementation of agreements, scholarships and incentives for indigenous creators and innovators to produce design tools, multimedia materials, cellular phone applications and other software related to indigenous languages, which permits the protection, reinforcement and revitalization of cultural identity in accord with with the manners and customs [of the peoples in question]."

The success indicator for this goal is: "número de estímulos creados y convocatorias étnicas implementadas con garantías presupuestales." ("Number of stimulus programs created and ethnic calls-for-proposals implemented with budget guarantees.")

This plan is quite strong in the area where the Australian plan is relatively less developed: it assigns clearer roles to national and regional government and provides accountability mechanisms for these entities (though there are no actual budget numbers in the plan). It also includes a discussion of the need for Indigenous Peoples to access social services and justice in their languages (p. 13-15). But as a corollary of this high-level focus, and in contrast to the Australia plan's local case studies, Colombia plan provides much less sense of how it will support Indigenous Peoples in developing projects to meet their local needs, and what kinds of media will be prioritized. Similarly, in the section on education (p. 74), the plan rightly calls for the development of culturally appropriate spaces, controlled by local Indigenous Peoples, for the teaching of Indigenous languages. But whether this means immersion schools, or schools with truly adequate local curriculum reflecting local culture, knowledge and values, as opposed to simply "a place to teach the language" is not made clear.

In summary, both Australia and Colombia should be congratulated as States leading the way in developing and implementing National Action Plans, and both plans are clearly serious attempts at addressing Indigenous language issues. Anyone developing a plan for another nation or region would certainly profit from reading both of these plans, which are striking in the different approaches that they have taken to the process and the challenges involved. While both plans show respect for the rights articulated in the Declaration, both plans could also be criticized at various points for how they propose to actually implement those rights in practice. Most importantly, their proposals for schooling in Indigenous languages seem either still too undefined, or else not sufficiently funded (or both) to meet the goals of maintaining or revitalizing languages to the point of daily community fluency. The same could be said about the role of emerging technologies with regard to Indigenous languages.

4. In-text language transcription

Part of the impetus for the national action plans, described above, comes from the Global Action Plan for IDIL, which calls on States to take measures to advance the goals of the Decade. At this point, however, according to UNESCO only 9 States out of 193 UN Member States have developed their national action plans: Australia, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Norway, Peru, Russian Federation, Ukraine and Venezuela. In addition, one action plan has been developed on a regional level for Africa.

As seen in the preceding section, national foci may vary significantly among each other, and differ from the global priorities. The action plan development methodologies are also clearly different. While this may be a result of national political differences and preferences, it could be based on the lack of guidance from UNESCO and the Global Task Force, which is comprised of Indigenous representatives from all regions, as well as States and others. While the Decade itself was proclaimed in 2019 and consequent calls for action from UN expert bodies appeared right away, UNESCO and the Global Task Force are still negotiating the draft Guidelines for the Development of National Action Plans for IDIL. The current draft underestimates the central role of Indigenous Peoples in developing IDIL priorities and provides for ambiguity in interpretation of the preferred composition of national task forces. The Guidelines are repetitive of the Global Action Plan, more reflective of existing practice rather than striving to improve it, and this may not provide much added value for the national and local drafters in terms of methodology.

It would also be helpful for UNESCO and the Global Task Force to issue interpretive guidance on languages in gender equality, eradication of hunger, climate solutions, access to justice, health, sustainable development and economic growth of Indigenous communities. Although some of these issues are implicit in the Australian and Colombian plans, there is little explicit discussion of these broader linguistic issues. This could affect if or when UNESCO undertakes studies on the role of pre-schools, or on nomadic ways of life, or specific education in language acquisition and achieving IDIL priorities, or when the World Health Organization will include languages in their policies as a determinant of health, or when the UN Industrial Development Organization will support Indigenous-led language-based business startups, as all recommended by the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. (UNPFII report E/2023/43).

The lack of international guidance, likely exacerbated by a lack of meaningful participation of Indigenous Peoples in the UNESCO processes, is impeding the inclusion of global priorities in the existing national action plans. As noted above, a narrow focus on language or linguistics may erase Indigenous Peoples' understandings and goals regarding language maintenance and revitalization as related to gender equality, climate change, and the other dynamics mentioned above. In addition, national action plans often contain limited information on how their implementation will be monitored and evaluated, how relevant language data will be collected, and whether there is a room for a periodic or on-demand update of these plans during IDIL. That said, the Russian Federation's national action plans emphasizes education, culture, digitization, literature and the media, which reflects the attitude of the Indigenous language communities.

The role of Indigenous languages in economics and ecology should also be addressed. On the one hand, the globalizing economy seems to prioritize dominant languages, thereby contributing to language shift from Indigenous languages to those perceive as more viable economically. Yet, at the same time, research shows a co-occurrence of linguistic and biodiversity – and biodiversity is understood as critical to the wellbeing of the earth and its inhabitants (Gorenflo 2012). Accordingly, the role of Indigenous languages needs to be better understood in the post-2030 development agenda. Global guidance and national actions plans should both identify and address concepts of a "language economy" or "language ecology" based on national and local specificities.

Innovative measures include introduction of new laws and financial packages to support jobs and businesses where the knowledge and use of Indigenous languages is essential. Consider, for example, some American Indian tribal governments' creation of language-based services, and related employment opportunities, for students, translators, teacher, archivists, and others. (Cherokee Nation 2023; Hoskin 2023). Yet, most Indigenous Peoples cannot fund these kind of opportunities on their own. Global guidance and national action plans should include economic indicators and programmatic measures to increase the prestige and value of these languages in national and more importantly local economies.

Another human rights pillar of the Global Action – the principle of free, prior and informed consent – does not appear to be as significant for some national action plans. This principle has at least two implications in the context of languages. First, acquisition of FPIC is required for the adoption of any language plan. And second, while negotiating with Indigenous Peoples on development projects or any other issues concerning them, the FPIC principles implies the disclosure of complete and reliable information. The "informed" element means that all information should be communicated to Indigenous Peoples in a form that provides an opportunity to study it in advance, if necessary, in Indigenous languages, too. The latter requires existence of a pool of qualified interpreters and translators, a necessity that is underestimated by the national action plans. The "informed" element of FPIC also means that for information is not to be not only accessed but also understood and analyzed by Indigenous communities. (Tsykarev, FPIC study). In order to meet this requirement, language communities would need to develop and use their own understandable terminology

that could include an extensive work of Indigenous translators and linguists. (NextGen conference FIT North America).

The Global Action Plan refers to the legislative reform that is an essential baseline for the Decade of Action. Some States need to introduce new concepts, first, to fully comply with the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and, second, to adopt its renewed legal framework for the purposes of IDIL. There are States that have yet to legally recognize Indigenous Peoples, never mind to recognize their languages. IDIL-friendly enabling and flexible legislation in most cases will require negotiation, and therefore it is good to have a step-by-step legislative reform schedule in a national action plan.

Finally, national action plans should take into account the new geopolitical realities and the tectonic shifts in international cooperation, including on the UN level. For example, while the global priority calls for support across international borders, the reality on the ground no longer permits constructive cross-border cooperation between Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia for the benefit of the Sami languages. The Norwegian national action plan includes a provision on a collaboration with other Nordic countries, while Russia's action plan does not mention cross-border issues at all. The challenging international climate does not provide for language technology exchange, which triggers discussion about investments in domestic language technology as a matter of national security in the sphere of linguistic diversity.

Despite some gaps existing national action plans have many positive elements. First of all, they are action oriented and contain concrete activities. Secondly, some national action plans provide for building institutional ecosystem for IDIL. Examples vary from the establishment of Ibero-American institute of Indigenous Languages in Latin America to the creation of a Center of Language Research in Russia. Some national action plans provide for a multi-layer structure that includes national, subnational and local levels.

For the governments, putting together a national action plan is a demonstration of political will to strengthen institutions focused on working with Indigenous Peoples, preserving their languages and culture. In Ecuador, for example, an Interministerial Commission for the Revitalization of Languages, Traditional Knowledge, Ancestral Knowledge and Intangible Heritage for 2022-2032 is established, which is leading the preparation of the Plan for the Revitalization of Languages, Wisdom and Heritage of Indigenous Peoples. (Side event in New York).

For Indigenous Peoples, a national action plan means recognition and dignity. Without recognition, language communities often have to rely on their own recourses and join IDIL with own initiatives and action plans. This is not ideal because the very concept of IDIL implies synergy of efforts of States, Indigenous Peoples, academia, businesses and other institutions. Even though, while in the United States, the White House Council on Native American Affairs, announced a draft 10-year plan to support Indigenous languages, it is not expressly associated with IDIL. (White House Council 2022). In this context some tribes have decided to join IDIL with their own tribal action plans, including the Shawnee Nation. (Barnes 2023). Another way for the communities to advocate for their language right remains international advocacy. At various events at the United Nations, Indigenous Peoples continue to re-emphasize their priorities that include language documentation and research, investments in standardization and technology, role of women in language transmission, importance of land rights and traditional way of life for the maintenance of Indigenous languages.

5. Conclusions

While the International Decade is already well underway, the process of drafting of national action plans jas only just begun. Our analysis indicates that more guidance from UNESCO and the Global Task Force, including Indigenous Peoples' representatives, together with States and scholars, is urgently needed to support this process. Moreover, national action plans should not be considered as carved in stone; there should be some room for change and improvement. Ten years is a relatively long time, and circumstances can change locally, domestically and internationally. In addition, the efforts associated with IDIL can produce interim effects that needs to be evaluated and taken into account for the further action. Therefore, corrections and updates to the national action plans should be a possibility.

In this analysis we suggested some metrics and guidelines for the drafters and UNESCO as the lead agency for IDIL. Whether speaking about bilingualism or early acquisition or Indigenous media, we should understand what it means in practical terms; for example, how many grades of school languages need to be included in to meet the goal of increasing the number of speakers or expanding to certain public domains. The drafters should also understand that lan-

guage instruction should be considered in a broader context of creation of educational environment across the chain "preschool – school – university", which in turn requires the training of teachers, encouraging parent community, and creating textbooks.. The national action plans should be ambitious as in case of the global one, but also, they should be realistic with feasible goals and indicators. Proper prioritization, the feasibility of support measures taken, investments in the well-being of languages and language communities will allow them to regain confidence in their native language, see the benefits of bilingualism and make indigenous languages useful in various socially significant areas.

National action plans will only be successful if there is a mandate for their implementation from Indigenous Peoples. Accordingly, these plans must be formed with the full participation, consultation, and consent of Indigenous Peoples. The national action plans should send a strong message from States that languages are not a burden but a development priority, and that Indigenous Peoples have agency to determine their own language related priorities. In these and other regards, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples offer a framework for changes that will ensure that Indigenous Peoples have the opportunity to speak and be understood in their native language, guarantee freedom of speech, religion and culture, receive medical care, participate in politics and democratic procedures, and ensure economic development.

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